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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The High Cost of Meth

Over the past several months, the people of Arizona have been faced with a drumbeat of bad news from their state government. The declining economy has created a large budget deficit, and cuts have been made across state government to many vital programs and services, including law enforcement.

Given our economic challenges, preventing crime becomes especially important. By keeping our communities safe, we also can save public dollars. One area where we can make a big cost-saving difference is drug prevention, and in particular, preventing methamphetamine use.

Methamphetamine costs the United States nearly \$24 billion a year, according to a recent study by the RAND Corporation. More than \$4 billion of that amount accrues to law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. These costs are especially high in our state. The Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network found that in 2007, 36 percent of arrestees entering Maricopa County jails tested positive for meth, and three out of four violent and property crimes were linked to meth.

Perhaps most troubling are the devastating effects meth has on the lives of children and young people. Sixty-five percent of child abuse and neglect cases in Arizona are tied to meth. Moreover, the young people whose lives are nearly destroyed by their own meth use begin early. According to the *2008 Arizona Youth Survey*, the average age of first-time use of teens surveyed is just 14.

As Attorney General, I have made fighting meth a top priority. For many years, I have worked to pass a statewide statute restricting pseudoephedrine, a key ingredient in meth production, and I collaborated with local officials to pass pseudoephedrine ordinances in 43 Arizona cities and towns. These efforts, together with a federal pseudoephedrine law, have helped curb the availability of meth. But given the drug's highly addictive nature, to stamp out this scourge we need to curb first-time use. For this reason, prevention is one of the most valuable tools we have for stopping meth use and stemming the high costs to our State and our neighborhoods.

The Arizona Meth Project is at the forefront of this state's efforts to combat the drug. A large-scale prevention campaign, the Arizona Meth Project launched in 2007 with public and private support. It focuses on reducing first-time meth use among teens 12 to 17 and uses graphic advertising to show young people the shocking consequences of meth use and addiction.

We have already seen signs of progress here. Thanks to the campaign, people across Arizona are thinking differently about methamphetamine. The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission reports that since the launch of the Arizona Meth Project campaign, use of the drug among youth has significantly declined, falling by more than half in many categories.

While we have made great progress in fighting meth in Arizona, use among our state's youth remains far too high. That's why I recently co-chaired an Arizona Meth Project Roundtable to discuss how far we have come and what needs to be done to further combat this vicious drug.

We engaged with groups from a variety of perspectives – from state and local law enforcement officials to PTA members to health care workers. All Arizonans must to work together if we are to put an end to the destructive effects of meth in Arizona.

You can find more information about meth and the Arizona Meth Project at my website www.azag.gov.

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